DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 563 CS 209 367

AUTHOR Blume, Pat
TITLE Feature Project--The Old West.
PUB DATE [84]
NOTE 5p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT Live Wire; v1 n2 p12-14 Oct 1984

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Assignments; Class Activities; Classroom Techniques; Elementary Education; *Integrated Activities; *Language Arts; *Learning Activities; Listening Skills; Peer Relationship; Reading Instruction; Speech Instruction; Speech Skills; *Student Motivation; *Teaching Methods; Writing Instruction; Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

The teaching activities presented in this paper focus on transforming the classroom into the Old West as a means of providing endless opportunities for writing, speaking, and listening in the areas of math, science, social studies, history, geography, music, and art. The paper contains directions for helping students to create scenes, in the classroom, for an Old West setting--such as a sheriff's office, general store, or stable. An Old West activity chart containing a variety of possibilities for classroom projects is included. (EL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED263563

Feature Project--The Old West

National Council of Teachers of English

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

NCTE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS 209 367

FEATURE PROJECT

The Old West

What would you think if you walked into a classroom and found yourself stepping into another time or place, much like being on a movie set complete with dwellings, scenery, lighting, furnishings, props, costumes, and makeup? Picture your classroom as an "Old West" town, with your students "living" in this setting.

Students enjoy becoming characters in a different place and time. They also learn more if they are allowed to research background information, recreate actual scenes, and then immerse themselves in the everyday activities of that world. By reliving the Old West, students increase their knowledge of this time period and enhance their language development. Although they remain in a modern classroom, their imaginations will work wonders.

Students take full responsibility for planning, constructing, furnishing, and maintaining their Old West environment. The teacher, whose role is like that of a producer of a movie or the city manager of a small town, helps plan, obtain materials, and build and maintain the environment.

Objects brought to class by the students are common and ordinary to the average household. These materials may include wood, cardboard, nails, furniture, lights, boxes, old clothes. Some of the desired objects are not as common, but they may be available to some students. Or, students could devise copies of the actual objects. As parents become involved with helping their children collect or construct items for the study unit, closer ties develop between home and school.

During a long unit on the Old West, a section of the room can be transformed each week into a different building or setting. Here are some scenes for students to create:

1. A stable complete with bales of straw, saddles, horse blankets, bridles, halters, horseshoes, buckets of feed, and pails of water. Drawings and pictures of horses are put on signs the students make to advertise horses for sale or rent (with prices based on students' research). Certain students become stable hands who take care of business at the barn.
2. A hotel office containing a desk and chair, a mailbox for keys and letters, and a desk ledger to register visitors. An adjoining hotel room might include a cot made from two desks covered with a sheet and blanket, a towel and washbowl, and a chair.
3. A restaurant made from tables and desks. The tables are set with place mats made by the students, secondhand dishes, silverware, and drinking glasses. The chalkboard behind the tables advertises specials for the day. These change regularly as do the cooks, waiters, and customers. Customers read through a student-made menu offering such Old West favorites as flapjacks, potato soup, spoon bread, and ham and eggs.
4. A mine in which students may dig for gold or a stream where they pan for gold. The gold may be taken to the bank and exchanged for currency, or it may be used to barter for food or other goods.
5. A Conestoga wagon made from an art table covered with hoops and an old sheet. The wagon is drawn by a horse made of wood or cardboard (or a toy horse may be brought from home).
6. A sheriff's office made from an old refrigerator box. A small desk holds legal records, and there is a ring of keys hanging from a hook. To aid in the capture of desperadoes, "wanted" posters are made and hung around the room. Next to the sheriff's office is another box that serves as a jail cell. Inside the box are bedding and a few utensils, and there are bars on the window.
7. A general store containing shelves of merchandise and a clothesline from which are hung bonnets, scarves, hats, or coonskin caps. Candles are offered for sale, as are boots, vests, shirts, and other items of cloth-

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Old West Activity Chart

Math Activities
- Linear measurement—miles, inches, yards, hands (horses)
- Capacity—pints, quarts, gallons, bushels, pecks
- Weight—drams, ounces, pounds, hundredweight
- Timeline
- Probability
- Trading, bartering

History
- Native Americans—Indian tribes, way of life, displacement
- Settlers—travel, communities, daily activities
- Gold rush
- Railroad
- Communication—pony express, telegraph
- Buildings—log cabin, sod house, claim shanty, bunkhouse, schoolhouse, church
- Clothing styles
- Outlaws and law enforcement

Science
- Mapping the land
- Rocks and minerals
- Animals
- Vegetation
- Climate
- Health and medicine

Speakers
- Horseman or cowboy
- Mining engineer or geologist
- American history teacher or professor
- Museum curator
- Grandfather or grandmother with memories of West

Special Events
- Medicine show
- Cowboy campfire
- Sewing bee or quilting party
- Rodeo
- Panning for gold

Music and Dance Activities
- Songs—"Home on the Range," "The Old Chisholm Trail"
- Instruments—guitar, fiddle, banjo, harmonica
- Square dancing

Writing Activities
- Diary or journal
- Research report
- Newspaper—town news, national events of period, advertisements, feature stories
- "Wanted" posters
- Recipe booklet
- List of Western terms and jargon

Reading
- *Bread and Butter Journey* by Anne Colver
- *The Cabin Faced West* by Jean Fritz
- *On the Banks of Plum Creek* by Laura Ingalls Wilder
- *Whichaway* by Glendon and Kathryn Swartout

Artisans
- Weaver—baskets, cloth
- Tailor, seamstress
- Potter
- Silversmith
- Blacksmith

Craft Projects
- Vest or calico bonnet
- Indian jewelry or beaded belts
- Rag rugs
- Handmade leather coin purses
- Soap or candle making

Other Art Projects
- Stagecoach or Conestoga wagon
- Cardboard cattle brands
- Cardboard buildings for town
- Indian tepee

Cooking Activities and Utensils
- Make spoonbread
- Fry flapjacks
- Churn butter
- Wooden spoons, bowls
- Metal plates
- Butter churn

Occupations
- Farmer, rancher
- Shopkeeper
- Schoolteacher
- Miner
- Sheriff
- Cook
- Peddler

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ing. There are real nuts, potatoes, and onions sold by the pound and weighed on a scale. Sale items also include ribbon and calico to be measured by the yard and buttons to be counted.

8. A doctor's office, which gives children a chance to write diagnoses of ailments and prescriptions. The examining table is covered with a sheet, and nearby are bandages, slings, and a thick reference book. The pharmacy fills the prescriptions with raisins or small pieces of candy.
9. A one-room schoolhouse containing several desks. Assignments are written on slates, and students must share a small collection of textbooks. In one corner is a potbellied stove.
10. A one-room cabin for a Western family. In the center is a woodstove made from a large box and used for both cooking and heating. Nearby shelves hold kitchen utensils and storage containers for flour, sugar, and other staples. Meals are served on a small table or desk covered with a plaid cloth. Articles of clothing hang from hooks or a clothesline. Two or three cots made from boxes or desks are covered with sheets and blankets. A small box with a blanket inside is a baby's cradle and contains a doll, possibly an old one. A few chairs are positioned near the woodstove, and small rag rugs cover the floor. A sewing basket holds fabric, scissors, thread, and needles. There is a small shelf of books, and hanging on the walls or standing in the corner are a broom, a banjo, and a rifle.

Transforming the classroom into the Old West provides endless opportunities for writing, speaking, listening, and reading in areas of math, science, social studies, history, geography, music, and art. Some of the possible classroom activities are listed on the Old West chart.

It is important that the Old West environment be as authentic as possible, both in the structure of the room and in the information the students collect. They are able to "experience" this time period through cooking foods from the era, hearing and reading stories set in these times, watching films and television shows, hearing speakers, taking trips to historical places, sewing and making articles used long ago, and writing about the times in a diary or for an Old West newspaper. When students become a newspaper editor, a sheriff, a patient, or a storekeeper, they can write or talk from that point of view. They feel they are not inventing an account of someone else's experience; they are writing or talking from their own experience.

Pat Blume, Windermere Elementary School, Columbus, Ohio

BEST COPY AVAILABLE